

## I Believe in the Holy Spirit, Who Works Holy Faith

### Introduction

- Transition to 3<sup>rd</sup> person Trinity. I think, of all parts of creed, person/work of HS most misunderstood in Christianity today. Most conservative Christian churches believe: Triune; Father Creator, Preserver; Jesus Savior, humil/exalt, judge (we've covered). When comes to HS (who, what, how), lot today teach inaccurately. Great opp to review, understand what means, title. Passage; 4 distinct truths. **Vs. 13b-14** ("**God chose you...**"). 4 truths; framework for today.

### 1. "To be saved"

- "Saved." What from? SS answer: sins; of course. Deeper. God needs save not only from what do, also are! If understand work of Spirit; need know who are, by very nature. Usually in liturgy say, "*I confess...by nature sinful.*" Sometimes breeze by so fast. What is nature? In Eden, nature was sinless, holy, perfectly in line with God. But since fall, when A&E broke God's law for very first time, curse has fallen on world, so that sin fills world and hearts. Very nature is corrupt. Born in sin, enemies of God. How we start – "*by nature sinful.*"
- Passages: "**As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins**" (Eph 2:1). "**The sinful mind is hostile to God**" (Rom 8:7). From our first lesson: "**The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them**" (1 Cor 2:14). What we all are by nature. Think about it like this: dungeon; born chained up in dark, wet dungeon; can't get out or see; sunlight of Gospel something never experienced. Why Luther's Expl: "*I believe that I cannot...*" On own, I can't free myself from prison. I need to be saved, not just from sinful things do, but from sinful person I am. 1<sup>st</sup> – "saved."

### 2. "The sanctifying work of the Spirit"

- Goes on, **vs. 13c**. Key phrase: sanctifying work of Spirit. Sanctify = make holy. So HS's work: sanctify us, make us holy, through belief in truth. (2 phrases same thing: makes holy by working holy faith to believe truth.) That at core is work of HS: pulls us out of dungeon of unbelief, works faith in hearts, JC as Savior. That's sanctifying work of Spirit. If you are Christian, only reason – HS has worked faith in your heart.
- Work something can't see with eyes; can't see faith. Can see fruits of faith. Can't CT scan, see faith in body; HS's work is invisible; why called Spirit (or Ghost; don't use often; makes think goblins, Halloween.) Fact is: HG, HS is invisible, powerful; like wind. Jesus: "**The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going**" (Jn 3:8). Talking HS; Pentecost wind. So, when passage: **vs. 13c**, talking about invisible, powerful work of HS to create, strengthen faith in person's heart.
- Bible has lot of word pictures for having faith in heart: enlightens (blind see); converts (change in life's direction; "**He will guide you into all truth**" Jn 16:12); gives rebirth (born 2<sup>nd</sup> time, not to sinful parents, but child of God); favorite – fire. Baptism candle; spark; fuel; HS starts, keeps faith.

### 3. "Through our gospel"

- Brings to 3<sup>rd</sup> truth. **Vs. 14a**. Gospel = good news of Jesus Christ (lived, died, rose); message of salvation. Question is: how does God get Gospel to us?
- Pipe illustration: students have seen; pipe; carry water from source to destination. God's love to our hearts, not through pipe but through Gospel, message of salvation, or Means of Grace = Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Through Word; through Sacrament (two special, tangible ways). All gospel, all conveys God's love to us. By nature, can't accept this Gospel; has to come to us; so God opened hand of faith. If through unbelief disconnected, faith dies.

#### 4. “That you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”

- Finally, 4<sup>th</sup> truth. Reason HS does this work, **vs. 14b**, heaven. HS wants you in heaven; so constantly bring Gospel to you to work holy faith in heart, so can go. But you have power to reject his work; you can separate yourself from Gospel. How? Stop coming church, reading Bible, coming to Bible class, taking Communion, appreciating Baptism, being student of Word: you’ll push self away from gospel.
- As pastor, encouragement: stay connected to Means of Grace, Gospel in Word and Sacrament, because when do, HS will be filling you with God’s love, growing fire of faith. By that faith you will “**share...**” (**vs. 14b**) someday in heaven.

#### *Conclusion*

- So, 4 truths – talked about: sinful nature (saved from it); what HS does (works faith in heart); how (through Gospel in W&S, Means of Grace); why (heaven).
- Close with beautiful benediction from lesson: **vs. 16-17** (all through Holy Spirit).

## **2 Thessalonians 2:13-17**

<sup>13</sup> But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because

God chose you as firstfruits to be saved

through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

<sup>14</sup> He called you to this through our gospel,

that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>15</sup> So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

<sup>16</sup> May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, <sup>17</sup> encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.